BEM COMICS NEWS

BEM-20 NOW BIGGER THAN EVER 25 PENCE THE COMICS NEWS FANZINE AUGUST 1978

THE GREAT DC DISASTER

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DC EXPLOSION BOMBS--50 CENT SIZE SCRAPPED AFTER 3 MONTHS, HALF THEIR TITLES CANCELLED

MARVEL REVIVE OLD TITLES, EXPAND COLOUR MAGAZINE LINE

ENGLEHART RETURNS TO COMICS

EAGLE AWARDS -- RESULTS INSIDE

HOWARD THE DUCK TO FINISH?

In an unprecedented move, due to the 50 cent, 44 page format failing to sell as well as had been hoped, DC has axed all its bimonthly titles and new projects, & is concentrating on twenty monthly comics in the standard size, 40 cent format, plus six bimonthly Dollar Comics. It seems that a new distribution system has been worked out which alleviates DC's need to over-produce in order to compensate for the number of books that are never put on sale --DC should be slimmer, but a more viable operation. As only about half the number of pages per month will now be produced, some staff are being laid off, including Al Milgrom, Larry Hama & Paul Kupperberg, Mike Gold's newly-appointed assistant.

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Listed below are the titles DC are now discontinuing, with the number of the last issue; the Batman Family Dollar Comic is replaced by a $1.00 DETECTIVE COMICS.

ALL STAR COMICS	74
ARMY AT WAR	1
BATMAN FAMILY	20
BATTLE CLASSICS	1
BLACK LIGHTNING	11
CLAW	12
DYNAMIC CLASSICS	1
DOORWAY INTO NIGHTMARE	5
FIRESTORM	5
HOUSE OF SECRETS	154
KAMANDI	59
OUR FIGHT'G FORCES	181
SECRETS OF HAUNTED HOUSE	14
SHOWCASE	104
STAR HUNTERS	7
STEEL	5
WEIRD MYSTERY TALES	25
WITCHING HOUR	85
LIMITED COLLECTORS' EDITION	C-60

TITLES NOT APPEARING:

DEMAND CLASSICS	1
DESERTER	1
STRANGE ADVENTURES	1
SWAMP THING	25
VIXEN	1
WESTERN CLASSICS	1

Here is the list of the 40 cent and the dollar comics DC will continue to publish --it will actually mean an increase in frequency for two of them

REMAINING MONTHLIES

ACTION COMICS
BATMAN
THE BRAVE & THE BOLD
D.C. COMICS PRESENTS
FLASH
GHOSTS
GREEN LANTERN
HOUSE OF MYSTERY
JONAH HEX
JUSTICE LEAGUE
MEN OF WAR
SGT ROCK
SUPERBOY & THE LEGION
SUPER FRIENDS
SUPERMAN
UNKNOWN SOLDIER
WARLORD
WEIRD WESTERN TALES
WEIRD WAR TALES
WONDER WOMAN

$1.00 - BI-MONTHLY

DETECTIVE COMICS Dec
G.I. COMBAT
WORLD'S FINEST
ADVENTURE COMICS Jan
SUPERMAN FAMILY
UNEXPECTED

BEM-20 August 1978
incorporating Fantasy Trader
editor & publisher: Martin Lock
consulting editor: Mike Cruden

BEM is published 5 times a year

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ADVERTISE IN FANTASY TRADER!

There's no cheaper way to get to so many comics fans, all Bem's subscribers & contributors included -- and Fantasy Trader's circulation is still continuing to rise!

AD RATES

Full page (7½" x 11½") £2.00
Half page (7½" x 5¾") £1.10
Quarter page (3¾" x 5¾") 60p
Eighth page (3¾" x 2¾") 30p

PLEASE NOTE: All pages will be reduced by 33% for printing. For your ad to print properly, your original must be in deep BLACK ink. Biro is not suitable, use black fibre tip only; if typed, make sure your ribbon is fairly new, as grey type will not reproduce. Photocopies are never black enough -- always send us the original. The address, for FT ads only, is:

Mike Cruden.

DEADLINE FOR FT #32: SEPT 1ST

BEM BACK ISSUES

While the early issues of Bem are now sold out, Bems 12 to 19 are still available at 25p each --or all eight for £1.50! 156 pages of Bem, including strips, interviews, articles and more; that's got to be a good deal...

ART CREDITS

Ray Aspden: FT pages 3 & 4; Brian Bonhomme: 7 (pencils); Dave Byrom: FT cover; Paul Jay: FT page 2 (strip); Rob MacGillivray: 15 (left); Terry Moore: 3, 5, 15 (right); Martin Noone: 2 (inks); Superswipe: 2 (pencils); Bob Watkins: 7 (inks); Geoffrey Whittaker: 12 (news logo).

NEWS AT BEM

I mentioned in Bem-19 that Chris Ash was working on a special project for Bem--and the 16-page comic that's part of this issue is the result! Chris completed the story, plus cover and colour separations, more quickly than I'd expected -- it seemed a nice idea to have it out in time for the Con to make this Bem a "summer special", so here it is! Of course, it means there's not space for all of Bem's usual features, but, using a reduced type size which gives almost 40% more words per page, we've managed to fit in a full-length Fan-Things, Reaction and Tale-Enders, a Thundermole strip, and a short "Made in Britain"... Or rather "Unamerican Activities", a title suggested by Paul Jay, who wins a Bem sub--and who also contributed one of his inimitable strips to our companion magazine Fantasy Trader. I do regret, though, that a late-arriving, but important, ad has meant that Katholicity has had to be held over to Bem-21; it's all typed up & ready to print, with an illustration by Black Jimmy Marshall --it's worth waiting for, though, a double-length edition, yet! This also means we've three ad pages in a row, not something I'll make a habit of.

When is a price rise not a price rise? Well, as you were warned last time, this issue costs 5p more for 4 extra pages -- or in fact 8 extra pages, due to the greater quantity of advertising. So, Bem's value is better than ever--not really a price rise, right? And neither will next issue's price rise really be a price rise -- if you are a subscriber. To improve Bem's national distribution, like Comic Media News International I'm arranging for the major fannish importers of comics, etc to take over the task of getting Bem into every specialist comics shop, and of course they need a larger profit margin to do this properly. So Bem-21's cover price will be 30p, still the best value in regular comics fanzines, with 24 or 28 pages, depending on the amount of advertising...and the price by post will also be 30p still, or five issues by post for £1.50, including Fantasy Trader. I think this move will prove good for Bem, will help Bem to continue to grow and improve--I hope you will back me up on this. To increase Bem's value for money, some pages may continue to be in this smaller print, as many people have suggested, if it works well this time--but not too many, as the larger page masters are rather difficult to produce.

One item I must mention; Howard Stangroom has passed on the art file of YANCY STREET JOURNAL to me. If you sent Howard any art he didn't use, and want it back, send me your name and address, plus a description of the art and a stamp, and I will return your work.

Next Bem will be out in time for the October 14th Comic Mart; the review deadline is September 8th, while letters for Reaction must get to me by August 25th. There'll be a new Made In America, Sigh, the Bem Ballot results, Review Section, and full-page strips by Terry Moore (of Thundermole) and Martin Dutton, plus the other columns, and as much else as can be fitted in! -Martin Lock

The Eagle Awards for 1977

As promised last time, I've tabulated the results of the Eagle Awards ballots returned to me--they are NOT the same as the full, official results as worked out by Richard Burton and his colleagues. The table below gives the results in Bem voting order, with the percentage immediately after the names. The entry in CAPITALS is the actual, official Eagle Award winner--the official percentages are at the right of the column.

I'm sure the various winners, the Eagle Awards themselves, and the various differences in the listings, will be widely discussed in next issue's letter column; I would say that categories 17 and 20 in the Bem figures are of course very biased, as people returning forms to Bem would tend to think first of Bem and its editor. Other differences are more interesting; while the total ballot figures are based on many more votes than the Bem results, the Bem-only figures come from the "hard core" of fans, the fanzine subscribers and contributors, while the total vote must have a significant proportion of more casual, less knowledgeable readers.

Remember, the true EAGLE winners are in capitals, the true voting percentages to the right; confusing, isn't it? -Martin Lock

1. Favourite comic book Artist

NEAL ADAMS (31.4%)	29.2%
Jim Starlin (27.5%)	23.2%
Marshall Rogers (13.7%)	15.1%
John Byrne (11.8%)	16.2%
George Perez (9.8%)	11.2%

2. Favourite comic book Writer

STEVE ENGLEHART (37.3%)	29.9%
Chris Claremont (27.5%)	20.5%
Steve Gerber (15.7%)	21.2%
Roy Thomas (11.8%)	17.4%
Marv Wolfman (3.9%)	6.2%

3. Favourite comic book (Dramatic)

Detective Comics (35.3%)	25.7%
X-MEN (29.4%)	31.6%
Conan (13.7%)	15.9%
Avengers (7.8%)	15.2%
Defenders (5.9%)	7.5%

4. Favourite black & white magazine

Marvel Preview (33.3%)	24.1%
SAVAGE SWORD (29.4%)	35.8%
Rampaging Hulk (15.7%)	17.3%
Creepy (5.9%)	7.3%
Eerie (3.9%)	6.7%

5. Favourite new Artist

MARSHALL ROGERS (35.3%)	51.6%
Mike Nasser (17.6%)	10.6%
Mike Golden (13.7%)	8.2%
Trev von Eeden (0%)	0.8%

6. Favourite comic book (Humour)

HOWARD THE DUCK (58.8%)	58.2%
Mad (11.8%)	16.8%
Plastic Man (9.8%)	8.4%
Cracked (5.9%)	2.0%
Crazy (0%)	1.1%

7. Favourite Inker

(TERRY AUSTIN (23.5%)	31.7%
(Tom Palmer (23.5%)	12.9%
(Klaus Janson (23.5%)	19.1%
Joe Sinnott (11.8%)	10.3%
Ernie Chan (9.8%)	15.2%

8. Favourite Character

(BATMAN (27.5%)	24.4%
(Warlock (27.5%)	23.3%
Conan (15.7%)	17.7%
Wolverine (11.8%)	13.1%
Howard the Duck (7.8%)	16.8%

9. Favourite Villain

THANOS (27.5%)	29.4%
Joker (21.6%)	15.9%
Scorpio (17.6%)	14.6%
Dr Doom (15.7%)	21.2%
Darkseid (11.8%)	10.7%

10. Favourite Team

X-MEN (31.4%)	34.4%
Justice Society (21.6%)	15.1%
Fantastic Four (15.7%)	16.0%
Avengers (13.7%)	19.3%
Defenders (9.8%)	10.6%

11. Favourite Supporting Character

Wolverine (25.5%)	18.5%
(PIP THE TROLL (21.6%)	21.6%
(Beverley Switzler (21.6%)	15.1%
Vision (11.8%)	21.0%
Impossible Man (3.9%)	12.6%

12. Character most worthy of own feature

Warlock (23.5%)	21.8%
Killraven (19.6%)	19.6%
SILVER SURFER (15.7%)	28.5%
Man-Thing (13.7%)	14.2%
Deathlok (11.8%)	8.9%

13. Favourite single comic book story

(AVENGERS ANNUAL #7 (25.5%)	32.7%
(Marvel Preview #11 (25.5%)	22.7%
Detective #472 (15.7%)	14.3%
Marvel Premiere #38 (11.8%)	10.0%
Howard the Duck #16 (7.8%)	9.5%

14. Favourite continued comic book story

Detective 471/472 (29.4%)	16.8%
(AVENGERS ANNUAL 7/ MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE ANNUAL 2 (21.6%)	29.9%
(X-Men 105, 107/108 (21.6%)	18.4%
Defenders 46/50 (15.7%)	17.4%
Star Wars 1/6 (9.8%)	7.5%

15. Favourite new title

Rampaging Hulk (23.5%)	20.1%
JOHN CARTER (21.6%)	26.9%
Star Hunters (19.6%)	19.8%
Shade (13.7%)	11.7%
Star Wars (9.8%)	10.4%

16. Favourite U.K. pro comics publication

2000 A.D. (33.3%)	23.8%
STARBURST (29.4%)	24.4%
House of Hammer (11.8%)	16.0%
Captain Britain (3.9%)	10.4%
Garth (2.0%)	6.4%

17. Favourite Fan publication

Bem (58.8%)	10.0%
(COMIC MEDIA NEWS (9.8%)	52.7%
(Panelologist (9.8%)	8.9%
Comics Unlimited (3.9%)	6.1%
Fantasy Advertiser (2.0%)	7.6%

18. Favourite U.K. comics character

JUDGE DREDD (43.1%)	25.5%
Captain Britain (11.8%)	14.3%
Garth (9.8%)	12.6%
Dan Dare (5.9%)	11.0%
Walter the Wobot (2.0%)	5.9%

19. Favourite U.K. artist

JOHN BOLTON (29.4%)	19.1%
(Brian Bolland (11.8%)	13.4%
(Ian Gibson (11.8%)	3.6%
Dave Gibbons (7.8%)	10.1%
Brian Lewis (5.9%)	10.1%

20. Favourite U.K. writer

MARTIN LOCK (51.0%)	19.3%
Peter O'Donnell (11.8%)	9.0%
Steve Parkhouse (5.9%)	5.1%
John Wagner/(Howard) (3.9%)	6.5%
Steve Moore (2.0%)	2.0%

21. Roll of Honour

Will Eisner (33.3%)	16.6%
STEVE ENGLEHART (23.5%)	27.4%
Steranko (19.6%)	18.2%
Jack Kirby (11.8%)	18.4%
Howard the Duck (5.9%)	10.7%

FAN THINGS

Let's start with the item of most immediate importance--the timetable for the Comicon:

SATURDAY 29TH JULY

10.00: Special coffee lounge opens.
11.30: Bar opens!
12.00: Wallets open--the dealer room is at your mercy...
3.00: Bar closes, forcing the artists to begin their workshop.
4.30: Dealer room closes.
5.00: Eagle Awards presentation.
5.30: Bar opens again, and an hour-long *Auction* begins.
6.45: Keynote Speech from Guest of Honour Don McGregor, followed by questions from the floor.
8.30: Film show begins, continuing until 8.00 on Sunday morning: Sinbad & the Eye of the Tiger, Jabberwocky, Freebie & the Bean, Freaks (the 1932 Tod Browning classic), Vault Of Horror, the Marx Brothers in Monkey Business, Dr Psyclops.

SUNDAY 30TH JULY

8.00: Films end.
10.00: Dealer room & coffee lounge re-open for business.
11.30: 30 minutes of cartoons.
12.00: Bar opens (until 2.30).
12.15: Panel on Dan Dare.
1.15: Lunch break.
2.15: Mystery panel. (?)
3.45: The Bargain Auction!
4.00: Coffee lounge closes.
5.00: Film show restarts: Live & Let Die, Rollerball, and perhaps a repeat of Freaks --we were all asleep during its first showing, after all!

And so we stumble out into the early evening, already thinking of the next get-together; there is of course Comicon II in Birmingham in five weeks time, with a maximum of 300 attendees (so remember to book in advance), and the "KAK" people on hand, plus all the usual events. A little further into the future is Rob Barrow's October 14th Comicbook Marketplace, which ends with "Black Belt Jones" starring Jim Kelly from "Enter the Dragon", while on the 16th December the film will be "Blazing Saddles". Rob is hoping to get all three recent ERB movies for Comicon 79 (Land That Time Forgot, At the Earth's Core, and People That Time Forgot), plus maybe the Spider-Man movie--now that <u>is</u> planning ahead!

But now let's talk about fanzines. This is the fifth column in a row I've talked about MEDIA--since it's one of the four regularly published British comics fanzines, that's not all that surprising. MEDIA ≠9 has 20 A5 pages for 21p by post from Phil Hall.

--9 pages of ads isn't much for an adzine, and Phil drops subtle hints that if his advertisers don't support him, and his readers, he'll say farewell to the zine after ≠11! So support him, people--we just can't afford to lose a comics fanzine at the moment. I've got to have something to write about, after all! On the text side, this issue contents itself with just the regular columns and a 3-page lettercol -- the art is coming along nicely, though, thanks to Pete Scott and Paul Killinger.

The second regular fanzine is COMIC MEDIA NEWS INTERNATIONAL, "Britain's No.1 Newszine"; ≠36 has a cover price of 40p, or 45p by post for 28 A4 pages from Richard Burton.

--and over 9 pages of ads is a lot for a non-adzine! Inside is the usual coverage of everything newsworthy -- and the revelation that this issue nearly was never assembled! Richard was offered the job of assistant to Mike Gold at DC -- if he'd taken it, he would have left CMNI behind, and I gather he'd have preferred to refund subscriptions, rather than see CMNI continue at a less professional level in other hands. And that would have been quite a blow!

The other two regular fanzines? You're reading one--and if you're a subscriber to Bem, you'll have had the other arrive with it; I guess I can't comment on Bem, but that does not apply to FANTASY TRADER. FT ≠31 has about 20 A5 pages for 12p by post from Martin Lock.

--or, of course, it's free to Bem subscribers. I've not seen the ad pages, but, for the benefit of non-subscribers, I can report it has a Dave Byrom cover of Judge Dredd and his 2000 A.D. friends, a new Paul Jay strip "Boggo, the Human Pile", a short illustrated article on Dan Dare by Ray Aspden, an opinion piece by Barry Winetrobe, and four pages of letters, well over half by the chap with the lead LoC in the August INVADERS! FT had more personality back when Mike Cruden ran it, but it's still being published -- that's the most important thing!

Staying with our editor's stuff (well, how d'you think I got this job in the first place?), Martin is of course British Agent for the Comics Heroines Fan Club; THE HEROINES SHOWCASE ≠13 is a special Red Sonja issue, with in-costume (just about) photos, Frank Thorne interview, and other goodies. For you patient types that don't mind 2/3 months delay, it costs 60p (to Martin) by sea mail (direct from America); by air it's £1 a go. I gather Bem subscribers can expect something to put next to the first British Edition of that zine, which was a supplement to Bem ≠9, before too long...

It's always pleasant to welcome a new fanzine; Barry K. Winetrobe, FT and Bem contributor-about-town(s), has joined forces with Geoff Lindsey to bring us VERTIGO ≠1, 12 A5 pages for 12p from Geoff

The front cover isn't exactly competition for Neal Adams, but the interior features show more thought and sense than any other first issue I can think of. Views, reviews, and a weird "What If" musical called "My Fair Kirby" -- what more should we ask?

Let's see; Jonny Kurzman reports that the long-advertised "Super Adventure Stories" should be out soon --in time for the Con, perhaps? And Phil Greenaway, publisher of MAGUS, and central mailer of PAPA, which appears to be thriving, complete with a waiting list, announces that he's hoping to bring out an all strip zine soon, with work by Bob Watkins and Upkar Hothi among others. NEXUS is the name to watch for. Phil Elliott has finished a third issue of ELIPSE; he's now trying to get a grant, so that he can publish it.

CAPTION ≠1 has 12 A5 pages for 22p from Trevor Hylton.

it's expensive, but chemical photocopying costs that much. If you collect first issues, here's another one; it's rather insubstantial, but you've got to start somewhere.

An interesting SF fanzine is THE FRIENDS OF KILGORE TROUT MAGAZINE; ≠2 has 32 A5 pages, litho, for 25p by post from Sandy Brown.

and is much more approachable than most SF fanzines. Con-going, house-moving with a large collection, slimming for fan artists--a nice selection, often very amusing.

For "Space: 1999" fans, MINI-MAG is of interest; ten issues cost £1.50 from Geoff Wright.

May/June is a double issue, with 15 13" x 8½" pages, including a quiz, an index to

the second year, what the actors are doing now, swap ads, letters, and a Tony Anholt interview. It's amateur, but then aren't we all, and quite informally put together--if Star Trek can have its own fandom, why not this British-produced SF show?

If you're wondering why I only said four comics fanzines were appearing regularly, let's look at some other candidates; COMICS UNLIMITED's 50th issue still hasn't appeared, and Alan Austin plans to take a year off from CU once it has come out, to build up his now-flagging enthusiasm. However the Fantasy Unlimited sales list will continue to be sent free to all subscribers. Colin Campbell has returned FANTASY ADVERTISER to Dez Skinn, its previous proprietor -- as one of my more controversial colleagues says, it's "a move hardly likely to instil confidence in FA's schedule", if one remembers his last few issues. And PANELOLOGIST is barely able to manage two issues a year--it does make every issue a "special occasion", but I'd much prefer one every two or three months. Issue 10 should be out for Comicon II, though, George says.

MAGAZINE OF TOMORROW ≠1 (17p from Graham Bleathman.

has 16 8" x 10" pages, and a pleasant mixture of comics, TV and SF. If your interests cover Trigan Empire, Thunderbirds, Star Maidens, and ERB, investigate further!

NEUTRON STAR PREVIEW is free for a 7p stamp from Colin Brake.

its four A4 pages include some nice art and a K. Williams story! You'll no doubt get info on the progress of issue 1, due out very shortly. FANZINE FANATIQUE, world's only ecletic (sic) fanzine reviewzine, marches on, at 17p for around 16 A4 pages, from Keith Walker.

its listing of over 60 fanzines every couple of months I find fascinating, and the other bits aren't bad either!

And that's the lot; Martin, are you <u>sure</u> people can read this tiny printing...? -ED SALLIS

<u>UNAMERICAN ACTIVITIES</u>

There's not room for a full "Made In Britain" type column this time--just as well, as I haven't time to do it justice at the moment!

The Lieutenant Blueberry series by Charlier & Giraud has reached four volumes, with "Lone Eagle" & "Mission To Mexico"; Ompa-Pa albums 4 & 5, by the Asterix team of Goscinny & Uderzo, are also out. Besides these, my "in tray" contains "Hagar in England", a Tintin or two, "Apache Canyon" by Morris & Goscinny, a Lucky Luke album I'd missed, Heavy Metals, and "In The Beginning", the second strip reprint Modesty Blaise paperback by Peter O'Donnell & Jim Holdaway, with a Trev Goring cover. Some good reading...

The usual summer specials of the weekly comics are around now--have a browse through them some time! BATTLE has a lot of fillers, but includes a nice Major Eazy 7-pager drawn by John Cooper, who also drew a One-Eyed Jack 6-pager for VALIANT, which also has Janus Stark, Captain Hurricane, Adam Eterno, and House of Dolmann. ACTION has Hook Jaw, Spinball, and Dredger, plus assorted old strips; TV COMIC has a Dr Who 7-pager among all the funnies. The best special though is 2000 A.D.--there's a Dan Dare story set between the Belardinelli issues and the Gibbons era, written & drawn by Gary Leach, a Mach Zero incident drawn by cover-artist Kevin O'neill, 9 pages of Mach-1 by Mike Lake & Trev Goring, and 8 of Judge Dredd by Willy Nilly and the Subliminal Kid, plus "Rick Random and the S.O.S. from Space", scripted by Harry Harrison & drawn by Ron Turner, from the 1950s --64 digest-size pages are reprinted 4 to a page! Often a summer special is less entertaining than a normal weekly issue, even though it costs four times as much for twice as many pages--but not when Tharg's around!

WHEELS, from the folk who published the recent TARZAN weekly & monthly, is best avoided; ≠1's mismatched pair of Euro-reprints are unexciting and, at 30p for 52 pages, poor value.

So, THE COMPLETE FF ended with ≠37 --I'm only surprised it hung on so long. The replacement of the weekly RAMPAGE (after ≠34) with a monthly 5p cheaper (35p) and 16 pages longer (68pp) than the British SAVAGE SWORD with (Rampaging) Hulk reprints in the front, plus Defenders and Nova, is a good move; a TV tie-in, yet!

LOOK-IN is worth a look-at these days; two full-colour pages of Jaime Sommers by John Bolton is worth 10p of my money, with Martin Asbury's Six Million Dollar Man, plus Man From Atlantis and Logan's Run, as a bonus.

STARLORD, IPC's slick SF weekly, is progressing nicely; Strontium Dog and Ro-Busters, Mind Wars, Planet of the Damned, and Timequake... I can recommend them all. Now, if they'd only get a less paranoid host--

See you next Bem, with, I hope, a full-length column! -RUAN LANIHORNE

COMICON II SEPT' 2nd-3rd

Imperial Hotel, Temple Street, Birmingham, B2.

Comicon II is being held to celebrate ten years of British comic fan gatherings. Special guests will be Dave Cockrum and Paul Neary. We'll be showing at least eight full length feature films and other events will include auctions, art displays and discustions, all for just £2. As we are trying to make Comicon II a more personal convention we will be restricting the attendance to 300. To make sure of your place at Comicon II you can register now by sending a cheque or postal order for £2 to:

COMICON II (Registrations),
212 Grange Road,
London, E.13 OHB.

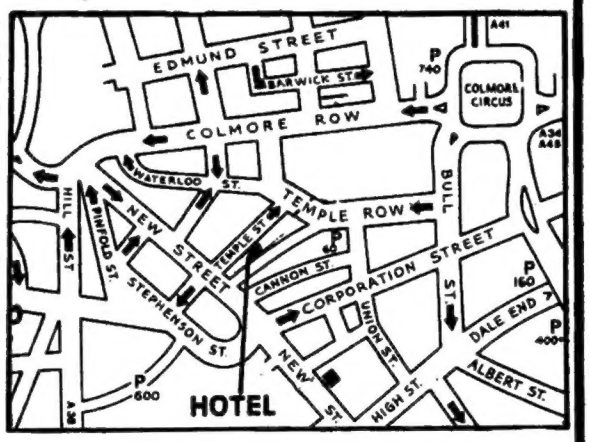
Please enclose an S.A.E. with your registration and make all cheques or postal orders payable to Fantasy Domain. As attendance will be restricted it's advisable to register early to avoid disappointment.

DEALERS

A few dealers tables are still available at £10 each, the cost covers both days and includes one free admission per table. All tables are wall position. Table bookings should be sent to:

COMICON II (Tables),
212 Grange Road,
London, E.13 OHB.

All tables MUST be paid for in advance. Please make all cheques or postal orders out to Fantasy Domain. Please enclose an S.A.E. with your booking.



A reminder to dealers who have reserved tables but have not yet paid, full payment on your tables MUST be made by JULY 14 or your reservation will be cancelled.

COMICBOOK MARKETPLACE OCTOBER 14th DECEMBER 16th

Lyndhurst Hall, Warden Road, Kentish Town, London, N.W.3.

The Comicbook Marketplace is not only the place to pick up those 'hard to find' back issues and latest imports but also somewhere where you can meet fellow fans and see old friends. If you hate marts that are vast and impersonal then the Comicbook Marketplace is for you.

Come along on October 14th and December 16th, we'll have over thirty tables stacked with over 100,000 comics, posters, portfolios, fanzines, black and white magazines and many other comics related items from Britain's top comics dealers. Doors open midday, see you there.

DEALERS

A limited number of both centre and wall positioned tables are available. Wall tables are £4.50 and centre tables are £3.50. Send your booking to:

Rob Barrow,
Fantasy Domain,
212 Grange Road,
London, E.13 OHB.

Please enclose an S.A.E. for confirmation.

HOW TO GET THERE

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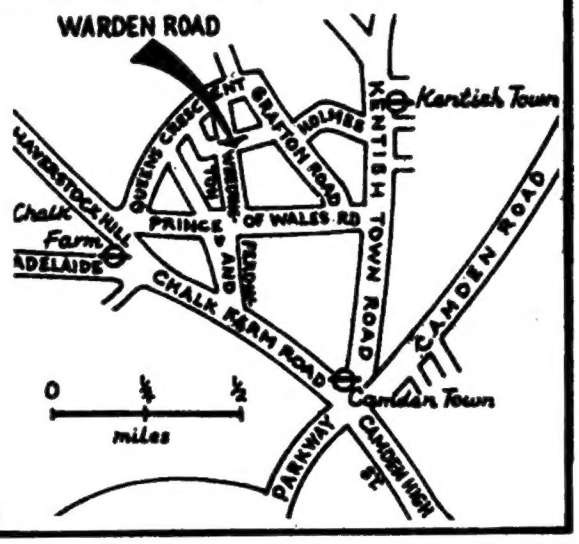
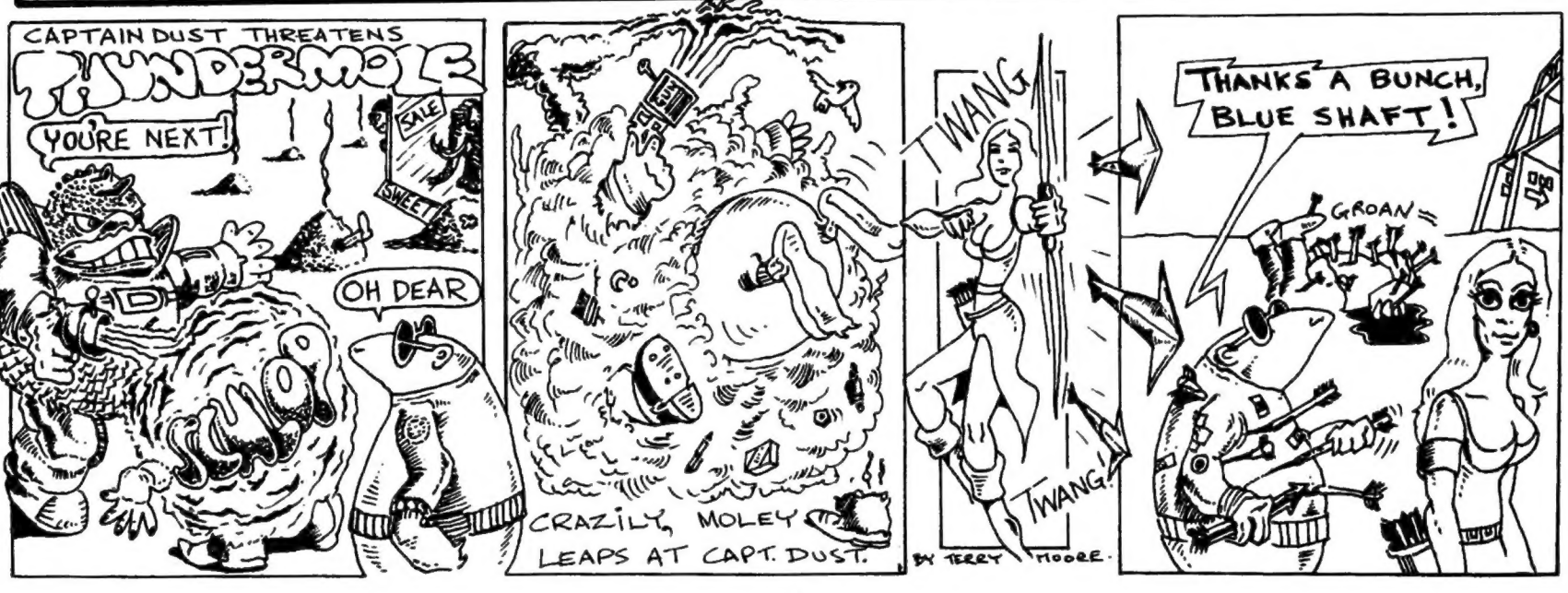


N.B. THE SEPTEMBER COMICBOOK MARKETPLACE IS NOW RE-SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 14TH



REDHILL

Barry K. Winetrobe I see in the lettercol that Don McGregor's apologists are at it again, desperately justifying Don's "expressive prose". It seems that appreciation of McGregor comes under the old formula WEIRD = WONDERFUL; that is, the zanier and more extreme a style the better it is. It reminds me of the stage that many teenage music fans go thru, admiring "progressive" bands like Tangerine Dream before realising that much of it is 90% rip-off pretention. Surely the aim of any creative artist, whether in music or comix, is not only to be different from the mainstream, but to make that originality meaningful.

Now I'm not accusing Don of having a cynical disregard of his public, unlike Gerber or perhaps Conway--far from it. Don appears from his work to be honest; if that is his true style and the mode whereby he can best express himself, so be it. It is not the quality of his work I am criticising, rather the instant fan worship he has generated based not on a considered appraisal of his style, but on its sheer novelty. It will be interesting to see what sort of reception he gets in July at the Comicon. /(Quite adulatory, I should think. I think you do fandom an injustice to infer we can be fooled by that which is merely novel. The Geek, most of Kirby's new titles, were/are novel, but didn't win fan approval. I think Don deserves his adulation because of sheer good writing; well thought out plots, interesting and believable dialogue, both at a much more than pulp level, unlike most comic writers, including Roy Thomas. Don McGregor tried to do something besides just tell a simple story.)/

Phil Greenaway Oh, like wow, man, smell that print... talk about gettin' high. An' the contents. Really somethin' else, y'know what I mean?

Take Fan-Things, for instance. Even though I've got most of the zines mentioned, I still found the column as enjoyable as ever. I was thinking though -- it would be a really neat idea if you were to have cover repros of fanzines.

The "Made In America" piece was interesting. Have we got an establishment where comic/cartoon art is put on display permanently? /(Nothing permanent, as far as I know. The nearest thing to what Howard was talking about was Doc Jock Garriock's travelling comic art exhibition back in '75, or was it '76.)/ If we were to have one, I should imagine that it would be a great place to visit; it would also enable people to discuss their hobbies with other people. I've only been to one mart to date, and I naturally talked comics with my friends (all correspondents--most of whom I hadn't met until then). It's strange though; I didn't talk to anyone that I didn't know. Nobody came up to me to say hullo, or to insult me or anything. Everyone was busy buying comics. Does that mean that people couldn't care less about fan communication, and that what George Barnett has been striving so hard for will be doomed to failure, just because people prefer to buy comics? /(I doubt any sort of permanent comic art exhibition could be established as a profitable enterprise. Perhaps we should be lobbying the Arts Council to provide a comic art section in one of their galleries -- an exhibition including work by Smith, Bellamy, Lawrence, Hampson, etc would be very worthwhile, and visually impressive. As far as non-communication goes, I think it's more typically British than typically comic fan.)/

To repeat what I said in my last (unpublished) letter, the people concerned with the APA are amongst the most enthusiastic in fandom. Mike shouldn't condemn the endeavour just because it seems pointless, being a poor compromise between a real fanzine and a clipped-together pile of letters (or words to that effect); I respect a lot of what you say, Mike ...but as far as the APA is concerned all involved are going to keep on enjoying its benefits for as long as possible, despite what you may say. Nice way you've got of provoking response, though -- you're a major talking point in several apazines. You really should persuade Martin to lend you a few mailings. /(Martin, will you lend me a few readings, please?)/

Dave Harwood doesn't seem to like the new Warren mag, 1984, very much, does he? Pity. As you may have gathered from my review, I liked it. If undergrounds had the quality of the strips that were in 1984, I might give them more than just a cursory glance. /(I think the feeling is that Warren publishes magazines, notably 1984, of unquestionable quality but dubious taste. Is 1984 doing the image of comics more harm than good? Could he be using his talent to produce a genuinely quality product instead of glossy rubbish. However, I still haven't seen 1984 myself, so don't know how blatantly spurious the sex may be.)/

Maureen James Do you realise that Bem-19 had 3 females listed as Main Contributors? Sue Cruden, Kath Glancy, and me. Do you think we're taking over?

Congratulations must go to Kath for her poetic Katholicity--I <u>can't</u> beat that, so I'll stick to prose.

Mike, I find myself agreeing with you about Phoenix being one of the most potentially powerful characters around. But how long will Marvel let her stay that way? I'd like to think she's paving the way for a new breed of heroines, but..... Black Widow I don't like, she irritates me, and always has. Storm is a favourite of mine, apart from her claustrophobia --although I'm not claustrophobic it makes me feel uneasy, which seems strange, since it's a character in a book I'm talking about.

I agree with Simon Booth about dealers not being like the Mafia or Opec, of course they aren't. They belong to the CIA the same as I do!

So, Tale-Enders ends. A minute's silence please; it will be missed. On the plus side Ed Sallis gets an extra page, but be careful, Martin, or all you'll have left to write is the editorial.

What happened to "Sigh" this time? Did writing a letter to FT exhaust K. Williams? /(No, but running all the way from Redhill to Wuster in an abortive effort to make the deadline did. Other things that exhaust K. Williams are... A Beano goes to the best suggestion. K. Williams' immediate family and employees are barred from entering this highly prestigious competition.)/

By the way, I very much enjoyed Sue Cruden's piece on a Comic Mart, but why doesn't she fancy a nice cup of tea/coffee? She should taste a friend of mine's curry. I'm not sure what he puts in it--but if you can't live dangerously at times...

I noticed the lettercol in FT is entitled "Whispers of Insanity"; does that mean you have to be insane to write? /(It helps)/ And if so, do I qualify? /(Dribble, grobble, grak!)/

Andy Brewer Yeah, I admit it, I
Manchester do not like Katholicity --usually. But she deserves an award this month. Anyone who has ever had to write a poem will realize how difficult it is... Kathleen, that was GOOD.

Great art often elevates a strip to a position it doesn't deserve to occupy--for example, SWAMP THING.

Now, this is a title which I really enjoyed, but if Wrightson hadn't drawn the first ten or so issues it wouldn't be called a classic. The Adams and Smith issues of AVENGERS are called classics too; they're not. Classics are something special; in my humble opinion the McGregor/Russell issues of War of the Worlds/Killraven are the finest thing ever to come out of comics. To my mind, they rank higher than Eisner's Spirit, Smith's Conan, or the Adams GL/GA.

Englehart's DETECTIVE is nearly a classic; his DR STRANGE certainly is. Just because comics are (supposed to be) in a rut, don't let standards of appreciation fall. There are many excellent comics writers, but very few classics are produced.

It appears now that DC are losing some of their best writers; Englehart has gone off, and now Michelinie is going over to Marvel. Am I being deceived, or are Marvel's standards rising again? X-MEN, DEFENDERS, DR STRANGE and CAPTAIN MARVEL are all fine titles, while over at DC I have a feeling things are getting worse. The JLA have certainly regressed; DETECTIVE is obviously suffering; even the Legion are going off. But they still have a few good titles going for them, I can still enjoy GL/GA and ALL STAR, even though they are getting worse. I'll persevere with the Legion, and Superman is still one of my favourite heroes.

Moving on to British comics, I still can't see what all the fuss is about, apart from HOUSE OF HORROR and STARBURST, which I hear isn't carrying comic strips any more, there is nothing of note. We might have the artists (compare John Bolton's work with Neal Adams' in HoH; I know I prefer Bolton's), but we sure as hell don't have the writers.

As to reading comics in public, Christ I don't think I could do it. I've only just got to the point where I tell anyone that I read the blamed things, I'm not up to flaunting it.

Jim Pyman I wish I knew how you produce good issues of Bem consistently. There! That's my bit of crawling out of the way. The only complaints I have concern the cover, Captain Frog, and Katholicity.

Firstly, the cover, I feel, should include original art in the vein of issues 17 & 18. Both the cover repros and the Red Sonja swipe, although very good, should've been on the inside, as it gave an amateurish quality to the whole mag. /(How can a pro cover give Bem an amateurish feel?)/ The logo didn't help matters either, and I feel it would look much better with 'BEM' in the centre, 'The Comics News Fanzine' on one side, and the date and price on the other, giving it a more symmetrical feel.

As for Captain Frog: Considering that it takes less than a minute to read, and is not <u>that</u> well-produced, I would prefer it to be replaced with the old "Page 4 Funnies", to allow for more variety and cater to more tastes.

The Red Sonja Interview was, to my mind, an enjoyable piece of lunacy, but Katholicity fell short, with terribly strained verse, contrived purely to make lines rhyme; all in all, it was a waste of time. (God, it's catching!)

It's incredible the improvement spot illoes have made in a few issues -- the only piece I'd criticise in £19 was the Luke Rainford 'Batman', he looked like he had a bum glued onto his chin. /(That was an illo of the Caped Crusader immediately after his little-publicised encounter with the nefarious, insidious Brigadier Bumm.)/ After reading of new, reduced rates for Nigel Balloch's T.S.O.C.E. I have decided to sling in my quid note, as the promise of cheap imports and a reduced-price fanzine seem to have returned me my money already.

How anybody can call Howard the Duck boring amazes: the parody of society today is very well-handled, and even if you don't have a very high opinion of the concept, you should still support it for Gerber's attempts to heighten the standard of the average comic-book. Applaud it for the effort, if not the end product. /(You seem completely certain that the Howard comic isn't simply an attempt to cash in on a phenomena. Certainly the Arab Annual was not particularly satirical or bitingly humorous, just moderately funny, and that's being generous.)/ The £1.50 line of all-colour magazines sounds a very innovative idea, and Gerber & Colan seem to be the driving force, each working on four features! Let's hope sales will enable the format to survive, so that serious and adult horror books (Satana), fantasy books (Weirdworld), satire books (HTD), & detective books (Chase) can emerge.

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COMMERCIAL VENTURE

Kathleen Glancy So I'm in dispute with Mike? A dangerous situation, from what one hears. Nevertheless, I maintain Hawkeye was really lovable under it all -- besides, I couldn't stand Captain America's pious attitude in those early issues of AVENGERS, and really liked Hawkeye much better -- whereas Wolvie has no redeeming traits. Moreover, another romantic triangle can only revolt the sensitive stomach. And last but not least, they're not really being honest about him. He is a psychopath. He is powerful. Yet, we are asked to believe, he hasn't ever killed anyone. Of course, if he did the Code would insist on his being convicted and punished. And that, I would say, would make a really interesting story -- I can't think of any case where a "hero" has been tried and convicted for a deliberate killing (The Punisher should be, but hasn't been -- there again, he only kills criminals. Wolvie isn't sane, and might pick on anyone.) -- and indeed where the defence would probably have to be insanity. Having fate intervene to stop him from ever actually taking life cheapens his character and makes him invalid. The fact is, sooner or later someone like that, if not put away in a mental home, would kill someone. So he should. He could kill Hellcat, my other pet hate, because her claws reach further than his.

/(In those early Avengers, from 17 on, Hawkeye played the enfant terrible; a spoilt kid who was made to seem even worse by his underhand scheming for leadership. I really felt sorry for Captain America having to put up with such a prick. However, through living life and facing facts, he's become one of the most amiable characters (along with the Beast) in comics today. Really growth of personality stuff; kudos to Lee, Thomas, Englehart etc. Wolverine I feel more sorry for than annoyed by. He's continuously trying to prove himself (because of his small stature), and just doesn't have the social personality to be able to fraternise normally with his colleagues in leisure time. His brashness conceals a very confused and sensitive nature; he's short-tempered, sure, and I'll bet an origin will reveal an emotionally deprived background, but a psychopath? Naahh.)/

David C. Wishart Issue 19's cover looked good in two colours; nice to see you using the best cover repros for your cover, rather than, say, a Kirby or Robbins monstrosity. While mentioning Robbins, it's interesting to note that they're giving Invaders and Human Fly a plug on the August bullpen page. I wonder when Marvel will cotton on to the fact that fans realise that Frank Robbins can't draw. That's why Man From Atlantis has been cancelled, why everybody complained before he started to draw Captain America, and I'm sure it was a factor in the decline of Morbius in Fear. I'm also sure that, after the likes of Shooter, Kane, Janson & Infantino producing the best Daredevil stories ever, the sales are going to plummet again when Robbins does the artwork, unless the Tribe or Tom Palmer completely obliterate his pencils and produce some half-decent finished stuff. Printing ecstatic letters that are juvenile (à la British Marvel) is not going to persuade people to buy the comic.

Did you see the Hulk tele-movie? Despite all the changes (quite legitimate, due to special fx costs), I thought it stood up well to the loads of criticism that will come its way. The peculiar way they filmed the Hulk in action, rather than standing out as imperfect effects, enhanced the treatment of the monster; although I saw it on a b/w TV, it by no means detracted from the enjoyment. If the series is kept at this standard, I'll be staying in at least one night a week -- it puts the old Batman live-action series where it belongs. I only hope the Spider-Man series is also as enjoyable. /(Yeah, I was completely mesmerised by a very well done adaptation; the only thing that jarred was the scene with the little girl, which came too close to being a Frankenstein rip-off.)/

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Ian Abrahams I'd like to mention I'm starting a new comics APA. Anyone interested in joining should contact me right away at 121, Mount Ambrose, Redruth, Cornwall TR15 1NW, enclosing a stamped addresses envelope please. I've not got everything totally worked out yet, as I'm waiting to hear other people's views, but the page size will be "quarto", the limit 20 members, mailings bimonthly or quarterly, and the pages per mailing in each zine not less than four (?). 21 copies of each apazine would be required, and the first mailing will be some time in August if all goes well, providing there are at least ten members sending in apazines.

I was pleased to see NOVA coming back on the WDL 12p schedule, it saves the cost of getting it as an import. But only the rubbish is distributed here today by Marvel; I would like to see Defenders, Hulk, FF, and perhaps Ghost Rider brought over instead of some of the trash, such as Black Panther. That was one book I wuz really into enjoying when McGregor was writing it; the Kurse of Kirby strikes again. Actually, being fair, it is better than Devil Dinosaur, which has got to be the flop of the year storywise, lacking believable plots and settings. Perhaps it's time to see Jack Kirby only being an artist, or else fading quietly into the sunset.

John Dakin Having just received Bem-19 I feel compelled to write a missive. It was something of a disappointment, or, to put it another way -- Yech! Oops, I shouldn't have said that as I'll probably be pilloried, but I don't care! Sometimes you can express more with one "Yech" than you can with a whole paragraph of lucid prose --roughly translated I figure it means "not good enough even to warrant specific & constructive criticism."

I wonder if anyone is similar to me in that although I love comics, I hate all the comic-type TV series. Top of my loathe list are the Six Million Dollar Man, Logan's Run, Man From Atlantis, and the Bionic Woman. /(I thought Logan's Run was quite good, especially with the Perez and Janson art.)/ Even so I'm still quite disappointed that the Wonder Woman show didn't come over, especially since Lynda Carter looked so tasty. Sorry, I shouldn't have introduced lust into my letter. Speaking of Star Trek, which we weren't, I've always fought shy of the mass of books that seem to be cashing in on the popularity of the programme, but recently I discovered the Fotonovel series, and have bought the first four. They are the next best thing to having the episodes as home movies, and I wish it were possible to have similar photographic novels of Blake's Seven /(Blake's Seven? Ahhh, or Aaiiee!)/ and the early Dr Who episodes amongst others. All four books are classy, the best being No.1, "City on the Edge of Forever", from the script by Harlan Ellison, and at 85 pence each they are underpriced over here.

Unlike Simon Booth, I get quite annoyed with some of the prices I see at Marts. When I can occasionally pick up an Adams GL/GA for 30p to 60p, I certainly wouldn't dream of paying the £4 price tag often asked. It's nice to see that Green Lantern #76 is going to be reprinted, as otherwise I doubt whether I'd ever have had the chance of reading it. /(I can remember with sickening clarity a certain dealer gloating over the fact he'd screwed some poor sod out of £17.50 for that issue. £4? What a bargain, eh?)/ At the comic marts there are certain dealers that I never go anywhere near, let alone actually look at their comics. Simon says that "a large proportion of fans are also dealers", well it is those fans who always provide the most reasonable prices, and surely more interaction between fans in this way is what any kind of Society should be aiming for, although it could prove difficult to put into practise. I couldn't care less about the "best interests of those fans who buy with a view to investment"--I buy comics because I enjoy reading them, and I despise the mercenary attitude that has produced collectors who go around buying up every available copy of rare issues. /(One aspect of a "real" comic mart might be an organiser who has the guts to ban those dealers who are purely and obviously in comics to exploit fandom.)/

Finally I'd like to mention the rather strange state of affairs at the moment in London over the pricing of 35 cent imports. "Dark They Were" are charging an all-time low of 20 pence (which means I'm buying a lot more imports than I used to), while "Weird Fantasy", the only other major shop, are charging 35 pence. I can't understand why there should be such a large difference. /(Like any good businessman, Bram Stokes is using low prices to attract more business, and perhaps make things difficult for his competitors, especially the dealers who sell imports at marts. He may not be making much profit on 20 pence imports, but if you get your other comics there, and a book or two, he'll be happy! -ML)/

Steve Noble First, I'll reply to Graeme Bassett's comments in FT #30 complaining about the lack of likenesses in American film & television adaptations. In the recent "Close Encounters" Super Special, Dave Kraft explained that it was a request "fairly standard with movie adaptations" that likenesses should not be adhered to. One can only presume that this is because the producers can never be sure if the casting will stay operative throughout an entire series, or during the production of a film. Oh, by the way, I cannot see someone as creative as McGregor or Gerber bothering to do an adaptation --they have better things to do with their time.

Reading Reaction, what struck me was the Cruden Comment about D.C. Thomson "not being on the ball" by not bringing out an SF comic. Surely this would be classed as a rip-off straight away by fandom at large! Personally, I think that they're in the right. Three SF comics on the stands at one time would be a little hard on the kiddies' pockets (and they, after all, are the main buyers of the things), and would probably only serve to decrease sales on all of them. /(If there is a market for SF at the moment, which appears to be the case, no company worth its salt would sit back and watch that market fall completely into the hands of their competitor. Sure, it would be a rip-off (i.e. cashing in on a trend), but isn't that what commercial companies are supposed to do?)/

The art content this issue was a lot better than in previous issues--none of those "poorer contributions" that Mike spoke of. Funnily enough, the best two illoes of the whole 'zine appeared on the same page.

Martin S. Forrest Well, Bem-19 was every bit as good as 18, if not better, and it should improve even further next issue with the extra four pages.

At the moment I'm in the midst of expanding my comic horizons from purely Marvel to other things, such as selected DC titles. Indeed in the last week I've bought 25 or more DC comics, including the Superman/Ali clash. It's not that I've become disenchanted with Marvel, far from it, but I heard so many good reports about Detective, GL/GA, Star Hunters, All-Star and so on that I felt that I was missing something. I was.

Right now I feel we're on the verge of a minor revolution, with DC's new 50c comics and Marvel's already partially established colour magazines, which look like eventually replacing their whole black & white line. If the fifty-centers succeed, Marvel will probably follow suit--the quicker the better, as far as I'm concerned.

David A. Simpson Glad to see a near total (two at the most) absence of swipes from Bem-19 -- while I understand their necessity in learning to draw like your favourite hack, in no way is their use as isolated spot illoes defensible. What was page 11's "Cringe" illo about? /(It was about 2 inches by 3 inches)/ And why were pages 9 and 12 blank? /(Another new experiment of Martin's --reader involvement, via the do-it-yourself fanzine!)/

Eagle Awards--what a waste. Small minded idiots taking this sort of thing seriously. At least it says "favourite" rather than best -- but how can one aggregate so many people's opinions. However, it does give some (aesthetic) reward to those elected favourites -- that almost makes it worthwhile!

Why do people slag the HUMAN FLY book? I find it heart-warming -- a hero who cares! Lovely. If you're so small-minded that you can do nothing but slag off what you don't understand, then don't read it. /(I don't really think it's a question of not understanding, more not liking.)/

Rich Morrissey At least the Eagle Awards aren't quite as biased in favour of Marvel this year as they were last, even though Englehart's work on Detective Comics seems to account for most of DC's representation this year. It certainly deserves it, and I hope this Batmanian can be forgiven for plumping for that series as much as possible -- although I certainly don't think it's the only thing DC has to offer that matches Marvel's best. I'm getting excited about the Legion of Super-Heroes as I haven't been since 1968; most of the really top-quality work was too late for this ballot, and I don't know how it can maintain its quality once the book drops to 40 pages and Sherman & McLeod leave (even Paul is going to be leaving soon, and Gerry Conway, regrettably, seems to be the designated successor unless Len Wein can be persuaded...), but right now it's one of my favourites. /(Strange, but I find most of the LSH stories as trivial, characterless & unreadable as ever. Few of the characters have anything more than 1-D personalities, many don't even have that. It suffers from having too many members, I think --I buy any issues that look artistically interesting, but that's it.)/

Kathleen Glancy's poem was brilliant -- if only Mark Gruenwald could see it! Most of the reviews I agree with, though I have a slightly higher opinion of NOVA and the LSH than your reviewers do. Nova may have been something of a Spidey imitation, but it's rather well written (not too many soap-opera tactics), and exceptionally well drawn by Infantino & Palmer. And that issue of the Legion wasn't as good as the recent work by Starlin and Sherman, but it seemed to me to be plotted rather well-- there were some telling points about the rather hackneyed second story, but I liked it anyway. Maybe regular readers tend to be more tolerant...

Dean Smith The news was interesting this time round, if only because the rapid expansion of Marvel's magazine line should confound all those knockers who've been saying that Marvel have not been making any innovations of late. Personally I would think that if we're to have comics costing a dollar or so they stand more chance of succeeding if they look like glossy magazines than ordinary comics --also, of course, with their lower page count they're easier to produce. Incidentally, if my memory is not faulty, didn't Marvel lead the way some years ago in producing a whole range of "giant-size all-new" comics when the price changed from 12c? At that time they made all their comics 48 pages for 25c, while the rest stayed at 32 pages and cost 15c. I think it was the failure of this experiment (along with the lack of suitable reprints) that made them go for the 20c price when DC went to 48 pages for 25c a few years later. /(If my memory serves me correctly, and please correct me if I'm wrong, Martin, Marvel (Lee) and DC (Infantino) privately agreed to raise most or all of their comics to the 25c price simultaneously. In fact, Lee only did this for one month, then reverted to the 15c price, leaving Infantino angry and stuck with a range of comics costing nearly twice as much as the competition's. So the story goes, but having higher priced comics doesn't seem to be worrying them this time around.)/ /(Stan Lee was cleverer than that, Mike -- he didn't go back to 15c, but started to sell the comics at 20c, with a bigger discount (50%) for wholesalers --as the 25c DCs still only gave the then-traditional 40%, both varieties gave 10 cents profit, but the Marvel line was cheaper, and thus appeared more attractive. Lee's higher discount rate is still with us, and is one reason comics these days cost so much; at 40% instead of 50%, a 35c comic would sell at only 30c! But I think Dean is thinking of Marvel's double-size line of 1968/69, when the 25c reprint books were joined not just by new material annuals, but also by MARVEL SUPER-HEROES as a "premiere" type book, plus a 68-page NOT BRAND ECHH title and a little something called THE SILVER SURFER. And now, back to Dean... -Martin)/

Made In America was very good this time around. If I ever get to the States a comics museum will be a must on my list of "places of culture to visit" if only to look at the carpet!

I didn't like the Red Sonja interview, but I don't like interviews with fictional characters all that much anyway. This one came off about as well as the Conan one in Media-scene, that's to say not at all. These things only come off if the author has a definite idea about the character, and has some precise ideas or views to get across, a prime example being the Tarzan interview in "Tarzan Alive". In the Red Sonja piece however we get no clear views on how Maureen sees the psychology of the character, or anything about her that we couldn't read in any of the comics. /(Maureen does point out the ludicrousness of Sonja's Oath, attitudes to men and armour. In fact RED SONJA must be about the most sexist magazine around today, as ridiculous in its own way as LOIS LANE was.)/

Was I the only one who wrote to Ruan about Tin-Tin? Oh well, at least we'll have something else in common he's read a few of Hergé's books.

I'm not sure if I'd call <u>any</u> comic writer "literary" but if anybody deserves that praise it's certainly McGregor and Gerber. Speaking of Gerber, I liked the way he ended the Cap America/Ameridroid story. Whenever a new writer takes over in the middle of someone else's story they tend to end it as quickly as possible --and that usually means an "all action" fight. Steve didn't even bother with the fight; Cap and the baddie just go their separate ways. I thought that was really neat -- it also saves them having to explain how the villain escaped death the next time he appears!

Hey, did you notice how much like Barry Smith (or B. Windsor Smith now) the Doorway to Nightmare cover looked --that's what comes of sharing the same studio, I guess.

Well, that's about all, except to say that you can't be serious about that being the last Tale-Enders, can you? /(Shore can, hombre!)/

John Foster Although I only read one British comic, and consider most of the rest rather below par, I must object to Colin French's easy or lazy assessment of the scene. I could go about refering to Iron Man or Doctor Strange as "shit"--if you object to something, why not argue your point, people would appreciate it much more.

The cover of Fantasy Trader was superb; more, please.

I store my comics all over. I have a chest full of those comics you keep but which don't mean a great deal, the odd British comic with a good cover, etc. Then I keep the bulk of my collection at the bottom of a big built-in wardrobe -- someday I'll commandeer the whole thing. My other more prized comics I keep on top of the wardrobe; this sounds crude, but it is in fact a fantastic place, the comics fit so snuggly.

I like Graeme Bassett. Am I odd? Although I must admit I sometimes find his humour a little odd, I do enjoy his serious letters, so come on "Mr Grimsby", save the humour for Media. Mike, do you know what Mike Ploog gets up to when he isn't drawing comics? /(He does film animation, eg "Wizards" and the probably forthcoming "Lord of the Rings".)/

Dave Harwood True to form Bem-19 was as entertaining and amiable as ever; I enjoyed it. But, if I may make an observation, I'm not sure if it qualifies as a criticism, the bulk of the contents were very much at one level, which is to say pretty lightweight, including Reaction.

Actually, I do not necessarily expect LoCs to be typified by perceptive, critical commentary, but that is what I expect of articles. Let me expand that: I expect it where the subject matter lends itself to this kind of treatment, a simple recitation of historical data usually being less than inspiring, at least in this context. In this respect Howard Siegel's 'Museum' report did seem rather cold and distant, reading almost like a publicity handout.

It is of course perfectly acceptable to feature pieces that are more lightweight and/or whimsical, such as those provided by Sue, Maureen & Kath, each of which would have been a welcome and enjoyable change of pace in 'heavier' surroundings. As it was, they all appeared together, with nothing to counterbalance them and thus seemed, to me, perhaps more ephemeral than they actually were.

On the other hand, it <u>is</u> nice to see the emergence of the fairer sex into this male-dominated preserve we call comics fandom. Under the circumstances the fact that both Maureen and Kath seem to be very self-assured ladies is not really a surprise. Or is that a sexist remark? It's hard to tell nowadays.

Staying with the ladies for a while (and why not?), I noted Maureen's comments on the exploitation of women in comics. Obviously she's right; the female form is exploited by every medium, comics being no exception. However, I wonder how valid to this argument is the point that all comic-book heroines are gorgeous-looking creatures in revealing costumes? Surely the same is true of the male protagonists, and by the traditional standards of our culture (whether or not you agree with them) it's more acceptable for women to run around in brightly-coloured leotards and tights than it is for men. I'm not sure what that proves though.

Conversely, there aren't any female equivalents of the 'monstrous' type of hero like the Thing, Man-Bat, Hulk etc (which I suppose helps Maureen's case more than mine), though Moondragon is bald, Storm doesn't have any eyeballs, and Mera has webbed feet. That must count for something.

It is a pity though that in order to make their heroines "more assertive", the comic-book writers find it necessary to go to the other extreme with man-haters like W.W., Valkyrie and Red Sonja, or staunch women's-libbers like Black Canary, Ms Marvel and Power Girl. There's nothing intrinsically wrong with comicbook women expressing feelings of emotional dependence for their menfolk, as long as the men do likewise (which is why it was such a shame, and so needless, when Silver St Cloud was summarily disposed of in Detective 476). Of course the intimation is that the feeling <u>is</u> mutual, but it tends to be more explicit in the women's behaviour and thoughts.

However, for a beautifully sympathetic portrayal of a <u>deliberate</u> dumb blonde, check out Showcase 100. Speaking of which, that comic, along with a few others recently (notably Michelinie's 'Superboy', the new Showcase 'Hawkman' and Englehart's JLA origin story) have all induced lovely waves of warm nostalgia and thus made the stories in question all the more enjoyable, for me at least (for some reason the Conway 'Challengers' failed to have this effect, though presumably he was trying for it). I wonder if it will become a trend like it did in the movies? In small doses I don't think it would necessarily be a bad thing.

I see the voting form for the Eagle awards is once again dominated by Marvel; the seemingly blind loyalty of their fans continues to amaze me. As a result I have no option but to put "pass" in half the categories, since I refuse to vote for anything I didn't put on my nominating ballot --I'm not prepared to pick out my favourite from the choices of other people. I must admit that the only reason I voted at all was so I could legitimately complain about the eventual result, since they're almost certain to be worlds apart from my choices. But then I think the whole exercise is pretty much a waste of time and effort anyway; I just can't see what purpose it serves. Besides, it depresses me that even mediocre Marvel titles can attract votes (HTD 16? I can't believe it), while so many superior DC products/creative people are just ignored.

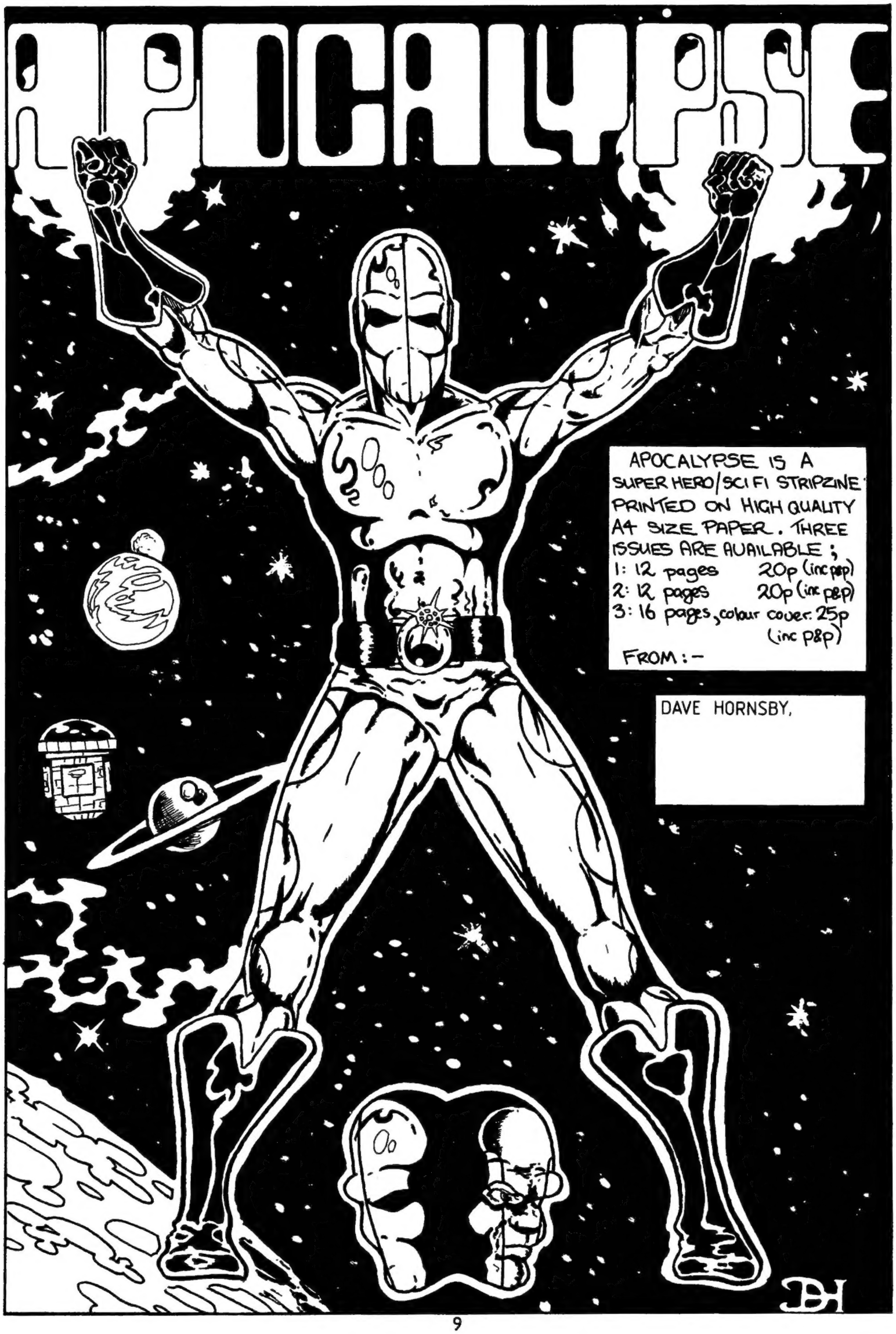
Dean Smith's thoughts on the future of comics were interesting but, wishful thinking aside, I think it would be virtually impossible to predict with any certainty how or whether comics are likely to change in the next ten years. A lot would depend on the state of the market, and recessions and/or booms are always on the cards. F'rinstance the Superman film, as well as the rash of TV comic adaptations, may instigate another boom like the one caused by the Batman TV series in the sixties. Or it may not.

Over the last fifteen years there have been quite a few periods of change; the 'Marvel Age' of characterization, the Batman camp era, the 'psychedelic art' period spearheaded by Steranko & Adams, the 'relevance' movement, the appearance and decline of various briefly popular 'fads' such as s & s, horror/monsters, and now probably sf. In a lot of cases the 'changes' have simply been modifications of the basic product: the superhero. Superman has been going strong now for forty years; I fully expect him to still be around in another forty. Plus ca change, plus c'est la même chose, and all that.

PS/ Hey, do you know I had to pay 5p excess postage on Bem-19? It must have been a 'heavy' issue after all!

PPS/ Don't you think it would be a better idea to print the names of your correspondents at the top of their letters in Reaction, rather than at the bottom? In that way you know at once whose letter you're reading. Just a thought.

PPPS/ Martin, aren't you amazed that Mike hasn'y interrupted this letter even once? I certainly am.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Comic News

Due to the sweeping changes to the DC line detailed on the front cover, most of the usual writer/artist news and so on is now out of date -- most of the cover repros here are of books that will never appear, at least in that form! BLACK LIGHTNING had been awarded a slot in WORLD'S FINEST--I would expect most of the completed (and paid for) extra work to appear eventually in the Dollar Comics, as back-up features, or in the remaining anthology titles. DEADMAN in UNEXPECTED? STAR HUNTERS in WEIRD WAR? STEEL in UNKNOWN SOLDIER? The JSA is being found a home in ADVENTURE, so it looks as if such moves are being planned for the most popular books.

Over at Marvel "still only 35c" Comics, there seems a possibility we may lose HOWARD THE DUCK --Steve Gerber is not working on the book any more. Issue 29, cover-dated January, is by Mark Evanier--it may be the last. The spectrum colour magazine is now "on the back-burner", along with the SATANA, WEIRDWORLD & STAR-LORD £1.50 titles. MARVEL PREVIEW ≠15 (b&w) will be detectives, as mentioned in Bem-19, followed by WEIRDWORLD or a new project, again still in b&w. STARLORD is to appear in a MARVEL COMICS SUPER SPECIAL in process colour, by Claremont, Infantino & Wiacek, and then return to MARVEL PREVIEW ≠17 & 18, which will be digest sized, with extra pages, in black & white. The SUPER SPECIAL format is also being used for JAWS II by Rick Marschall, Gene Colan & Tom Palmer, SGT. PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND by Kraft & Perez, and a second KISS book by Macchio & Perez, all due out in September.

MARVEL PREMIERE ≠45 & 46 feature MAN-WOLF, and ≠47 & 48 spotlight the return of ANT-MAN by Michelinie, who is the new permanent AVENGERS writer, plus Byrne & Layton.

Frank Thorne will cease drawing RED SONJA with ≠11 in order to work on her one-shot colour magazine. Bob Layton is the new regular HULK inker from ≠230, while Dan Green takes on that task for GODZILLA. Sal Buscema takes over pencilling TARZAN soon, including the TARZAN ANNUAL. Wayne Boring is drawing a Roy Thomas THOR story in which Goldilocks battles both Hyperions. Jack Kirby gives up BLACK PANTHER with ≠12; Ed Hannigan is the new scripter. Gene Colan is returning to DAREDEVIL with ≠156.

BATTLE STAR GALACTICA is a regular new £1.50 colour magazine tied in to the new TV SF series; Roger McKenzie and Ernie Colon are responsible.

SUPER-VILLAIN TEAM-UP and SHANNA THE SHE-DEVIL are returning soon.

MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE ≠51-57 will be a 7-parter involving Quasar, Deathlok, Giant-Man, Wundarr, and Thundra--the next 3-parter will feature the coming of HER, drawn by John Byrne.

The I.P.C. weekly comic STARLORD is being cancelled in October--it is to merge into 2000 A.D. with prog 86. Apparently it has just proved to be too expensive... To make room for some of the Starlord strips, Dan Dare will be rested after prog 85; "Ant Wars" also ends in that issue. The Judge Dredd "The Cursed Earth" 25-part series also ends at that time, to be followed, in the first joint issue, by the start of another multi-parter featuring Judge Caligula.

Prog 76, out for the Comicon weekend, is also an important issue; not only does it contain "The Illusion Man", a Future-Shock drawn by Frisano and written by a certain well-known Eagle Award-winning writer, but it also sees the debut of Robo-Hunter by T.B. Grover & Ian Gibson (although the first three episodes were drawn by Ferrer). Judge Dredd and Dan Dare continue, along with "Ant Wars", but Mach Zero and Inferno finish in prog 75, allowing more space for Future-Shocks and the 4 continuing strips.

The merger means that the planned return of "Flesh" and "Rick Random" may well be delayed. -ML

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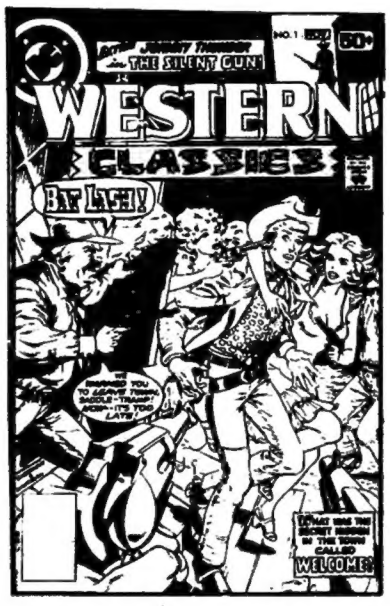

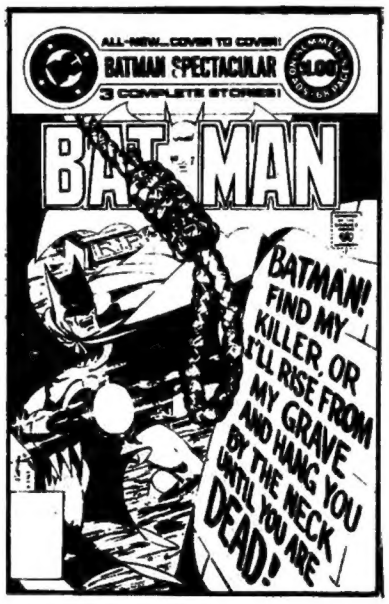
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TALE-ENDERS

The news from DC came after 'd read my latest batch of imports; it came as a shock, too. SHOWCASE ≠104 reads like a good reason to put that particular title back in mothballs--if "O.S.S. Spies At War" could make a successful regular comic, then how come BLITZKREIG isn't setting any sales records? Robert Kanigher wrote all three stories; Bill Draut drew one, and Ric Estrada two. WEIRD WAR ≠67 is a better battle book, even if the "all new" claim forgets that the Mike Grell "The Alien Among Us" was printed in AMAZING WORLD OF DC ≠12. That still leaves the Harris & Cruz "Attack of the Undead", and a 6-page Howie Chaykin-drawn air war weirdie. The extra pages in SGT ROCK ≠320 give Rock room for a 15-page adventure, plus two back-ups from Joe Kubert's pupils at his art school, while MEN OF WAR ≠9 has 12 pages for "Gravedigger -- R.I.P.", 7 for "Dateline: Frontline" drawn by Grandenetti, and 6 for a marvelous flight with Enemy Ace by Kanigher & Chaykin.

The only Sept/Oct Dollar Comic I have to hand is the first big issue of ADVENTURE, ≠459, which is also the first 68-page, no ads Dollar Comic. A bad move, taking away that extra thickness and that extra little bit of height they had--as much reading as before, but it doesn't look as much for your money. Inside, we have a nice selection of DC's heroes; 12 pages of FLASH by his regular team of Bates, Novick & McLaughlin, Wein & Aparo's 10-page DEADMAN re-start, a GREEN LANTERN 8-page SF adventure by Burkett & Staton, 7 pages by the Beefburger Bunch (Wein, Levitz, Gold, Delary-Gold & Mitchell) of Elongated Man, drawn by Ruppert & Patterson, 1/2 pages of Wonder Woman by Harris, Abel & Giacoia, and the first half of the conclusion of the NEW GODS saga (15 pages!), "Climax of Chaos", by Conway, Newton & Scotto. If that lot doesn't tempt you, you'd better skip on to the next column!

The first 50c DOORWAY TO NIGHTMARE (≠5) is also the final issue, from Scott Edelman, Romeo Tanghal & Vince Colletta; a shame, as the book was on to something, and deserved to be a survivor. However, when you look at the list of cancellations, only seven come as shocks--the rest were the newer titles that would probably not have lasted much longer, anyway. It's just that putting them in one lump makes it look worse! DC COMICS PRESENTS ≠2, by Pasko, Garcia Lopez & Adkins, concludes Superman's two-part team-up with Flash, with plenty of time paradoxes, and an appearance by Superboy and the LSH! It's quite a complex tale -- but enjoyable.

Moving on to Marvel, MARVEL PREVIEW ≠14 is the most impressive comic for quite a while; not only do we get 37 pages of Starlord and "Ship" by Chris Claremont, Carmine Infantino, & Bob Wiacek, but there's also an 8-pager by Dave Kraft & Bob Wakelin, and a 7-page illustrated text story by Rick Marschall, the editor of Marvel's magazine line, and Alfredo Alcala. "Sandsong" is the best Starlord tale yet; significantly, it seems aimed at a more adult audience, and I don't just mean that the top half of the heroine's costume isn't indestructible. The tale illustrated by Bob Wakelin and his air-brush could have come from an underground, or Heavy Metal; and the "visual-novel format" final piece, while the text and art aren't integrated properly, shows a willingness to experiment. If Marvel can continue along these lines, they are going to make a lot of people very, very happy! It more than makes up for MARVEL COMICS SUPER SPECIAL ≠4, "The Beatles Story", rather a waste of Kraft, Perez & Janson.

Claremont & Byrne are on leave of absence from MARVEL TEAM-UP now, due to the monthly X-MEN, so ≠74 is by Gary Friedrich, neo-pro Kerry Gammil, & Don Perlin, with Spider-Man getting involved with one of the Owl's bids for revenge on Daredevil -- villains never learn, do they? It's a fill-in issue, the third such in a row; not the way to carry on for long...

WARLORD OF MARS ANNUAL ≠2 was out among the September releases, by Bill Mantlo & Ernie Chan; it's an adaptation of "The Headmen of Mars", and I enjoyed it, though I'd have liked to see Nebres on inks as usual. After a fill-in in July, CAPTAIN MARVEL ≠58 seems to be returning to the type of plots that Jim Starlin did so well; Doug Moench brings back the Destroyer and, though the villain himself is dead, the master plan of Thanos lives on! Nice art by Broderick & McLeod, too. X-MEN ≠113, by Claremont, Byrne & Austin, is another excellent issue --too bad almost all our heroes are dead at the end, and Phoenix and the Beast about to succumb to frost-bite, but them's the breaks!

Finally, TOMB OF DRACULA ≠66, by as ever Marv, Gene & Tom, continues to be Marvel's most consistently fine title. Dracula is mortal now, and it makes for some interesting situations --but, alive or undead, he is still Dracula. Photographed, sun-lit, even shot--still Dracula. I just hope that they manage to go monthly soon.

And so ends the final Tale-Enders; but weep not, this is an evolution, not an ending. After five full years it's time for a change--so watch for "The Worlds of Emlock" coming to this fanzine soon! I'd like to thank all the people who voted for Bem and for me in the Eagle Awards--it's really great to feel appreciated.

-MARTIN LOCK